



# Letter from Taizé

n° 271 Quarterly 0,75 €  
2011/2

PROCESSED

APR 26 2011

GTU LIBRARY

**"A joyful heart, that is your life. Leave sadness behind!" This appeal from a believer who lived long before Christ is also meant for us today. We undergo trials and suffering in our lives, sometimes for long periods. But we always want to try and rediscover the joy of living. (Brother Alois, Letter from Chile)**

## Moses (Kenya)

Personally, it has been hard for me to embrace joy in our day-to-day activities after we lost two of our family members in such a short span of time. We were asking ourselves what was going on in our life. I have been going to church praying asking God to retain our joy, and within no time the joy came back to me and my family. It's hard to find joy while living in a worldly manner, since joy is a gift from God.

Therefore by following His commandments, we are subjected to God's joy which every human in this world wants. We are asked to spread joy to others because we are the light of the world, let our light reach everyone. We should share our joy like the way we share light in Taizé on Saturdays; to me it had a big impact on my life and I drew my strength from that act of lighting the candles because I knew what it meant in my life. May our God pour joy into our life because that's what we need most in our modern life.

**What brings a human life to fulfillment is not spectacular exploits, but a serene joy that touches the depths of the heart. The unfinished and fragmented character of every life, along with the suffering, is not eliminated, but this does not extinguish serenity. (Note 2)**

## Ryan (USA)

When I think of opting for joy, I think first of reacting in opposition to depression or

sadness. But I can practice choosing joy now, even when I am granted a current, fleeting happiness. Too often, I take unthinking comfort in my good mood. But when the tide recedes and I am no longer happy, I am revealed to be completely dependent on my ephemeral emotion.

Opting for the joy of the Divine, therefore, requires moving from mindless to mindful. Instead of deciding I am entitled to happiness, I must thank God that right now, all is bright. Then I remember that my hope is not in my surroundings or in my mental state. I remind myself that the reason I act must not be self-serving; my life is not for my own happiness. However, because my good humor is temporary does not mean that it is evil. It is merely not the goal towards which I strive. And then I pray that when I eventually do find myself in darkness, I will not grope about for the world's light, but rejoice in the light of the Word.

**Sometimes those who suffer poverty and deprivation are capable of a spontaneous joy in living, a joy that resists discouragement.**

## Maria Laura (Argentina)

The joy of those who live in poverty has always been a mystery for me. When I was 15 my life crossed the life of the poor, first as part of a missionary community and today, ten years later, with the Dominican Youth Movement searching for social justice. I cannot run away from this, aware as I am of all the rights that as a society we trample on.

And curiously, ever since I have shared with them situations of deep sadness and powerlessness, seeing people hurt and beaten, resigned and disillusioned, lonely and spiritless, without hope and inspiration, I have experienced the joy of living, because these same people taught me that in the midst of hopelessness and situations of painful injustice there is a God who walks with us day by day. They know that he supports them in their daily struggles, helping them to survive, even when they have no more strength. These people get up each day with the living trust that God is there in their midst and loves them deeply. This is shown through small signs: the care of a mother who watches her child grow, children who share the little they have with their brothers and sisters, young people enjoying a dance, women bursting into laughter during a meeting and supporting one another, old people who work together and get back the gleam in their eyes, simple and deep conversations around a bowl of *mate*, a prayer in the middle of the village. In these moments of simple communion I discovered a God who invites us to draw the best from each person and give it to others, a God who shows himself in the simple and the lowly. They are capable of hope, of hospitality, of enriching life, of praying, of struggling, of celebrating, of feeding, of loving, and they invite me to live in communion, to share the bread of the poor and their hunger as well.

Thanks to them I have learned that happiness is not a personal search, but a fellowship of body and blood, of life and death, of sorrow and hope, of yours and mine. Today I want to remain in the midst



## Unfailing Joy

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your *epieikēs*\* be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

It may seem paradoxical that the letter of Saint Paul that speaks most about joy was written in prison, at a moment when the apostle does not even know whether he will be freed or whether he will undergo martyrdom. But precisely in this difficult and complicated situation he discovers the secret of Christian joy and shares it with us.

Humanly speaking, joy or happiness seems to be above all a question of favorable circumstances. I am happy when I am surrounded by friends, when I have a desirable future before me, when I have a rewarding job, and so on. But in that case, it would scarcely be possible to rejoice "always," because life leads us through dark valleys just as often as up onto exhilarating mountaintops.

Paul has found, in fact, a source of happiness that will never fail. It consists in a communion with the risen Christ, who has already passed through the lowest point of the human condition (3:10). Rooted in this Life, the apostle experiences a joy that nothing can impair. Whether he lives or dies, whether others shower him with affection or compete with him as rivals (1:15-20), all that is the same to him when seen from the standpoint of his relationship with Christ, which surpasses everything (3:8). He has learned to be satisfied with everything, to turn everything to good account (4:11-13).

This equanimity whatever happens, this unflappable serenity and smiling good humor because of the nearness of Christ is, for Paul, the clearest sign of the life of faith. This attitude is summed up in the word *epieikēs*, which receives such a rich and profound content here that all our translations approach it without ever managing to capture it. It is, in fact, the key to the epistle, the secret of Christian joy.

Naturally, like everybody else Paul has worries. But instead of letting them poison his existence, he places them through prayer in Christ's movement from death to life, where thanksgiving always takes the first place. And the text concludes by speaking of God's *shalom*, a peace and fullness beyond words that enables believers to go through everything and to remain in a constantly reawakened joy.

**Have I ever experienced unexpected joy and peace in moments of trial?**

**What helps me to deepen my union with the living Christ?**

**What role does the prayer of petition and of thanksgiving play in my life?**

## Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833)

A monk of the Orthodox Church, a highly revered saint in Russia, Seraphim of Sarov in many ways embodies the radicalism and optimism of the Gospel. Entering the monastery of Sarov at the age of 17, Prokhor Moshnin received the name Seraphim, Hebrew "the fiery one." As he later wrote: *A lighted candle, while burning with earthly fire, lights other candles that will illuminate other places without diminishing its luster. If that is the property of earthly fire, what about the fire of the grace of the Holy Spirit?*

Alternately a baker, sexton, carpenter and lumberjack, he struggled during his early years in the monastery against the disease of dropsy. After a vision of the Mother of God, along with the apostles Peter and John, he fully recovered and spent the next seventeen years of his life living as a hermit in the forest. It is said that he prayed for a thousand days and a thousand nights kneeling on a rock, his arms outstretched to the sky. His prayer calmed even the animals around him: a wild bear he fed became his friend. One day when he received a guest, he asked the bear to go and get some honey to offer by way of welcome. And the animal complied at once.

On another occasion when he was welcoming visitors, a tragic incident occurred: some bandits assaulted him to steal his money, he who had only an icon and a Bible along with a few utensils. He never fully recovered from his injuries and from then on walked hunched over, leaning on a stick. Again he was visited by the Mother of God. When the bandits were arrested, he forgave them and asked the authorities to grant them clemency.

Following this episode, he took upon himself for three years "the cross of complete silence," no longer receiving anyone and devoting his energy to prayer. He recited continuously the prayer of the Name of Jesus: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

After receiving from his abbot the order to return



1 Jn 20:19-23

**1 SUN** The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

1 Jn 4:7-12

**2 Mon** God's love for us has been shown in this way: God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him.

2 Tm 2:8-13

**3 Tue** St. Paul writes: Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. On his account I have suffered, even to the point of being put in chains like a criminal.

1 Co 15:12-28

**4 Wed** Paul writes: Christ has been raised from the dead. For just as all die in Adam, so in Christ all will be brought to life.

1 P 1:13-21

**5 Thu** After the model of the Holy One who has called you, be holy yourselves in all that you do.

Jn 21:15-17

**6 Fri** Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

Jn 6:57-63

**7 Sat** Jesus said: The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Lk 24:13-35

**8 SUN** When he was at table with two disciples, the Risen Christ took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and began to give it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

Ps 113

**9 Mon** God is on high, but bends down to both heaven and earth. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts up the needy.

Jr 31:31-34

**10 Tue** The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

Ep 4:1-13

**11 Wed** Christ descended to the depths of the earth, and he who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

Is 40:25-31

**12 Thu** God gives strength to the weary and the weak.

1 Jn 3:1-3

**13 Fri** How great a love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called God's children. And that is what we are!

Col 3:1-4

**14 Sat** You have been raised with Christ, so set your hearts on things above. For you have died and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God.

Jn 10:1-10

**15 SUN** Jesus said: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

Jn 12:23-36

**16 Mon** Jesus said: When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to me.

Lk 24:13-34

**17 Tue** Having recognized the Risen Christ, the disciples at Emmaus set out that moment and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven who said to them, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Jr 17:14-17

**18 Wed** Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.

Jb 42:1-6

**19 Thu** Job said to God: I have spoken about things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. I knew you only by hearsay before, but now my eyes have seen you.

Col 2:6-10

**20 Fri** Paul writes: In Christ, all the fullness of God lives in bodily form, and in him you too find fulfillment.

Lk 4:14-30

**21 Sat** The Lord has sent me to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim freedom to those in captivity.

Jn 14:1-3

**22 SUN** Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me.

Ps 119:33-40

**23 Mon** Turn my heart towards your way, O God, and not to selfish gain. By your word give me life.

Heb 5:1-10

**24 Tue** Jesus offered up prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and with tears, to the one who was able to save him from death; he surrendered himself and was heard.

1 Jn 2:1-6

**25 Wed** John writes: Whoever claims to be in Christ must walk as he did.

Mt 10:37-42

**26 Thu** Jesus said: If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, they will certainly not lose their reward.

Rm 6:12-14

**27 Fri** Give yourselves to God and then sin will no longer have any power over you — you are not under law, but under grace.

1 Th 2:1-13

**28 Sat** Paul writes: We give thanks to God because when you heard the Word you received it not as the word of human beings, but for what it really is, God's word, which is at work in you.

Jn 14:18-21

**29 SUN** Jesus said to his disciples: In a short time the world will no longer see me, but you will see that I live and you will also live.

St 2:1-11

**30 Mon** You who revere the Lord, trust in him, await his good gifts: everlasting joy and mercy.

Is 66:12-14

**31 Tue** The Lord says: I am going to send peace to my people like a river. When you see this, your heart will rejoice.

# MAY

## DAILY READINGS

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.



**5** Jn 17:1-11

**SUN** Jesus prayed: Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you and give eternal life to all those you have given him.

**6** Hos 14:2-9

**Mon** The Lord says: I will cure my people of their disloyalty, I shall love them with all my heart. I hear them and watch over them.

**7** Rm 5:1-11

**Tue** Our hope will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

**8** Is 65:1-7

**Wed** God says: I will go before you and will level the mountains so that you may know that I am the Lord, the one who calls you by name.

**9** Ep 5:14-20

**Thu** Let yourselves be filled by the Spirit. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.

**10** 1 Jn 1:5-7

**Fri** If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we are in communion with one another.

**11** Mk 13:5-13

**Sat** Jesus said to his disciples: When you are taken to be handed over, do not worry about what you will say. No, say whatever is given you when the time comes, for it is not you who will be speaking but the Holy Spirit.

**1** Jn 8:28-32

**Wed** Jesus said: The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me on my own, for I always do what pleases him.

**2** Ep 1:15-23

**Thu** ASCENSION  
May God enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may see the hope to which he calls you.

**3** Mk 16:15-20

**Fri** Jesus sent out his disciples, saying: Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.

**4** Mk 9:30-37

**Sat** Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wants to be first, they must make themselves last of all and servant of all.

**12** Jn 20:19-31

**SUN** PENTECOST  
The Risen Christ breathed upon his disciples and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.

**13** Zc 2:14-17

**Mon** Sing and rejoice, my people, for I am coming to live among you, says the Lord.

**14** Rm 7:4-6

**Tue** Paul writes: Having died to what was binding us, we are released from the Law to serve in the new life of the Spirit.

**15** 1 Co 2:12-16

**Wed** We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that comes from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

**16** Ac 10:1-35

**Thu** Peter said: I now really understand that God has no favourites, but that in every nation he loves those who revere him and act justly.

**17** Ps 119:1-16

**Fri** With all my heart I seek you, O God. I treasure your promises in my heart so as not to sin against you.

**18** Mt 16:13-20

**Sat** Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, for this was not revealed to you by any human, but by my Father in heaven."

**19** Jn 3:13-17

**SUN** God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

**20** 2 Co 1:3-7

**Mon** Blessed be God who consoles us in all our afflictions. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

**21** Ep 2:19-22

**Tue** You are part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

**22** 1 Jn 5:14-15

**Wed** John writes: We are confident that if we ask God for anything, and it is in accordance with his will, he will hear us.

**23** Dt 8:14-18

**Thu** Moses said to the people: Do not forget the Lord your God who delivered you from the land of slavery, who guided you through this vast desert, and who in a waterless place gave you water out of hard rock.

**24** Mt 11:2-15

**Fri** St JOHN THE BAPTIST  
Jesus said of John the Baptist: He is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you to prepare your way.

**25** Mt 13:31-33

**Sat** Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with a large amount of flour until the whole thing rose.

**26** Jn 6:51-58

**SUN** Jesus said: Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise them up on the last day.

**27** Hos 6:3-4, 6

**Mon** The Lord says: I desire faithful love, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.

**28** 2 Co 12:1-10

**Tue** Paul writes: God said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

**29** 2 Tm 4:6-18

**Wed** SS PETER AND PAUL  
Paul writes: I have fought the good fight to the end. I have run the race to the finish. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give me.

**30** Mt 20:24-28

**Thu** Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the ransom of many.

God of love, when we ask you what you expect of us, we realize that you call us to be a reflection of your presence.

# JUNE

## DAILY READINGS

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.



Bless us, God of life,  
and bless those you have  
entrusted to us. Keep us in  
the spirit of the Beatitudes  
— joy, simplicity and  
mercy.

**3SUN** Mt 11:28-30 Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**4Mon** Lk 11:27-28 Jesus said: Happy are they who hear the word of God and obey it.

**5Tue** Ga 5:1-6 Paul writes: Stand firm, for Christ has set us free in order for us to remain free.

**6Wed** 1 Th 1:1-8 Paul writes: You have imitated us and the Lord by welcoming the Word with the joy of the Holy Spirit despite severe suffering.

**7Thu** 2 Tm 1:12-14 Paul writes to Timothy: With the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, keep safe the good deposit of faith given to you.

**8Fri** Mt 7:18-20 What God can compare with you, Lord, for pardoning sin and overlooking transgression? You will again have compassion on us, treading our sins underfoot.

**9Sat** 1 P 1:13-21 Through Christ you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for this very purpose — that your faith and hope should be in God.

**1Fri** 1 P 5:5-7 Clothe yourselves in humility in your relationships with others, for God gives his grace to the humble.

**2Sat** Is 61:1-4 The Lord sent me to comfort all who mourn, to clothe them in festive garments instead of despondency.

**10SUN** Mt 13:1-23 In a parable, Jesus said: The seed which was sown in good soil is like someone who hears the Word and understands it; that person bears fruit.

**11Mon** Jn 3:12 The Lord says: Return to me, for I am merciful.

**12Tue** Jn 10:22-30 Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I and the Father are one.

**13Wed** Mt 7:1-5 Jesus said: Do not judge, and you will not be judged.

**14Thu** Mt 8:18-22 Jesus said: Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

**15Fri** Mk 8:27-35 Jesus taught his disciples: The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously and to be rejected by the chief priests and scribes, to be put to death, and after three days to rise again.

**16Sat** Ps 5 By your faithful love I may enter your house, where I bow down in adoration. Lead me, Lord, in your justice.

**17SUN** Mt 13:31-32 Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which someone took and sowed in their field. Of all seeds it is the smallest, yet once it has grown it is the biggest of plants.

**18Mon** Heb 13:14-19 Keep doing good works and sharing your resources, for these are the kinds of sacrifice that please God.

**19Tue** Mt 12:46-50 Jesus said: Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

**20Wed** Jn 3:31-8 The Lord says: Look, I am bringing recovery and healing to my people. I will reveal to them peace and faithfulness in full measure.

**21Thu** Jm 1:21-25 James writes: Those who listen to the word of God but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like.

**22Fri** Lk 17:3-4 Jesus said: If your brother wrongs you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent", forgive him.

**23Sat** Gal 3:8-11 You have put on a new self that is being renewed in the image of its Creator. Here there is no room for distinction between persons; there is only Christ, who is all and in all.

**24SUN** Mt 13:44-46 Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field that someone has found; they hide it again, and in their joy sell everything they have and buy that field.

**25Mon** Mt 20:20-28 St JAMES Jesus said to his disciples: You know that in the world the powerful make their power felt. Among you this is not to happen. No, anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant.

**26Tue** Rm 11:29,33-36 Paul writes: God never revokes his gifts or his call.

**27Wed** Ps 119:49-56 Your will is a song for me. In the night I remember your name, Lord.

**28Thu** Ps 103 Bless the Lord, my soul; let all that is in me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul; forget none of his good deeds.

**29Fri** Jr 32:37-41 The Lord says: I shall make an everlasting covenant with my people; never to cease in my efforts for their good.

**30Sat** 2 Tm 2:22-26 Paul writes: A servant of the Lord must not engage in quarrels but should be welcoming to all and patient in adversity.

# JULY

## DAILY READINGS



**28 SUN** <sup>Mt 16:21-27</sup> Jesus said: Whoever tries to save their life will lose it, but whoever risks their life for my sake will find it.

**29 Mon** <sup>Ba 4:36-37</sup> The Lord says to his people: Look and see the joy that is coming to you from God.

**30 Tue** <sup>1 Jn 2:3-11</sup> Whoever loves their brother or sister lives in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling.

**31 Wed** <sup>1 P 2:4-10</sup> Come to Christ, the living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in God's sight.

**21 SUN** <sup>Mt 16:13-20</sup> Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do people say I am?" "Some say John the Baptist," they answered, "some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But you," he said, "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

**22 Mon** <sup>Ep 3:14-19</sup> May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may you be rooted and established in love, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

**23 Tue** <sup>Lk 19:1-10</sup> Jesus said: The Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.

**24 Wed** <sup>Rm 8:31-39</sup> St. Paul writes: I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

**25 Thu** <sup>1 Jn 4:16-21</sup> This is the command Christ gave us: whoever loves God must also love their brother and sister.

**26 Fri** <sup>1 Co 13:8-13</sup> Paul writes: These three things remain: Faith, hope and love. And the greatest of them is love.

**27 Sat** <sup>Rm 12:14-21</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who are rejoicing, weep with those who weep.

**14 SUN** <sup>Mt 15:21-28</sup> Jesus said to the Canaanite woman: Woman, you have great faith! May your wish be granted.

**15 Mon** <sup>Lk 1:39-56</sup> **THE VIRGIN MARY** Mary said: The Lord's merciful love stretches from age to age upon those who revere him.

**16 Tue** <sup>Gn 28:10-22</sup> The Lord says: I am with you, I will watch over you wherever you go. I will not abandon you before accomplishing what I have promised you.

**17 Wed** <sup>Dt 6:4-9</sup> Moses said to the people: The Lord our God is the only God. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.

**18 Thu** <sup>Ga 2:15-21</sup> Paul writes: The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**19 Fri** <sup>Jm 1:22-25</sup> James writes: Do not only listen to the Word, put it into practice.

**20 Sat** <sup>Jn 15:1-8</sup> Jesus said: I am the true vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

**7 SUN** <sup>Mt 14:23-33</sup> Jesus went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came he was there, alone.

**8 Mon** <sup>1 K 19:1-8</sup> When Elijah was discouraged, an angel of God touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and, strengthened by that food, he walked until he reached the mountain of God.

**9 Tue** <sup>Mk 6:45-52</sup> When they saw Jesus walking on the water, the disciples were terrified. But at once he spoke to them saying, "Have courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

**10 Wed** <sup>Rm 15:1-6</sup> May the God of perseverance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves, so that with one heart and one voice you may glorify God.

**11 Thu** <sup>2 Th 3:1-5</sup> Paul writes: May the Lord turn your hearts towards the love of God and the perseverance of Christ.

**12 Fri** <sup>2 Co 5:20-6:2</sup> Paul writes: We are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were making his appeal through us. And we implore you in the name of Christ: be reconciled to God. Now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.

**13 Sat** <sup>Jn 15:18-27</sup> Jesus said to his disciples, "My choice of you has drawn you out of the world. Remember: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they kept my word, they will keep yours as well."

**1 Mon** <sup>Jr 7:21-24</sup> The Lord says: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you will be my people. In everything, follow the way that I will mark out for your happiness.

**2 Tue** <sup>Mk 10:17-22</sup> Jesus said to a person who questioned him: You lack one thing. Go, sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

**3 Wed** <sup>Sr 17:1-14</sup> God created human beings in his image; he has placed his light in their hearts.

**4 Thu** <sup>Mt 10:37-42</sup> Jesus told those he sent out: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

**5 Fri** <sup>Gn 50:15-21</sup> Joseph forgave his brothers saying: Do not be afraid. The harm you planned to do me has, by God's design, been turned to good, to bring about the survival of a numerous people.

**6 Sat** <sup>Mt 17:1-8</sup> **TRANSFIGURATION** On the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, a bright cloud covered the disciples and a voice said: This is my beloved Son on whom my favour rests; listen to him.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.



## Pleasure, Happiness, Joy

the monastery, he lived among his brethren as a  
 use in a cell for fifteen years. He prayed and read  
 Gospel, the whole New Testament each week.  
 After more than thirty years in solitude, he could  
 te in his spiritual instructions: *When you pray,*  
*concentrate your mind and gather it in your heart.*  
*Then, when the Lord will have warmed your heart*  
*by his grace, in union with the Spirit, your prayers*  
*will flow without interruption and will always be*  
*for you, making you glad and nourishing you.*

The end of his confinement approached: the  
 Father of God ordered him to leave his cell to  
 serve others. At age 63, he became a "father" and  
 spiritual advisor to thousands of monks and lay  
 people. His life appeared like a revelation "of the  
 future of the age to come." He greeted all his visitors  
 with the words, *Hello, my joy!* or *Christ is risen!*  
 neighboring farmers, soldiers, monks, pilgrims,  
 princes, priests, women of the world, high offi-  
 cials of the church, merchants: they all came by  
 the hundreds and crowded around him to ques-  
 tion him, to hear him, to see him.

What did they see? A little old man, "all white,  
 shriveled, dried up, with blue eyes" and an "unbe-  
 lievably radiant" smile, said one of those who con-  
 fided in him.

His warm reception, his wisdom, his "second  
 father" (he welcomed some people with the words:  
 "I know, I know," letting them enter before anyone  
 else to give them advice and consolation, even before  
 they said who they were or why they had come) re-  
 stored courage to the tormented.

To his superior he advised: *Be a mother to your*  
*monks.* To the young: *Have patience with yourself*  
*and bear your own flaws as you do those of your neigh-*  
*ors, but without indulging in laziness and constantly*  
*striving to do better.*

He also received the grace to give birth to "spiritual  
 children." Among them was Nicolas Motovilov,  
 miraculously healed of multiple sclerosis. On the  
 evening of life of the "staretz" he would receive this  
 testament along with a detailed explanation: *The*  
*secret of the Christian life consists in acquiring the Holy*  
*Spirit.*

On the night of January 1-2, 1833, in the midst  
 of the Christmas season, Father Seraphim was heard  
 singing Easter hymns and the Troparion of the Res-  
 urrection. At dawn, he was found dead on his knees  
 before the icon of the Virgin of Tenderness.

These words noted down by Motovilov during a  
 long conversation sum up well the object of Sera-  
 phim's striving throughout his life: *Acquire inner*  
*peace, and thousands around you will find salvation.*

Pleasure plays a considerable role in the never-ending development of a  
 human personality: a role that builds it up and gives it a fundamental  
 structure. For we are desire, a desire that responds to another primary  
 and mysterious Desire that calls us into existence. We are desire to be,  
 desire to be more and more, desire to be happy.

Pleasure, then, is when this desire is fulfilled, at least partially. Now  
 often pleasure is not happy to be relative: it tends to usurp the first  
 place, to engage one's whole desire. The challenge then is to be lucid, to  
 be in control, not in opposition to pleasure, but in order that pleasure  
 may be real. For it is not just any pleasure experienced in any way that  
 can be a true symbol of the happiness I really aspire to.

It is by starting from our varied experiences of pleasure that we can  
 have an idea of what happiness is and can aspire to it. It constitutes an  
 inner experience that is deeper and above all more all-encompassing,  
 more stable, less immediate, less dependent on circumstances. For,  
 more than pleasures, happiness should also be revealed to us by the  
 meaning we see in our life. The idea that I have of happiness will help  
 me to decide which pleasure is good and which pleasure, even if legiti-  
 mate in itself, is not.

To meet Christ, to choose God, to live in accordance with the Gos-  
 pel—all this does not mean renouncing happiness, or even the taste for  
 pleasure. The choice is not between God and happiness; the choice is to  
 make of God and the covenant he proposes our prime happiness, and  
 the criterion of what our pleasures shall be. Saint Augustine assures us:  
 "Everyone who turns to God sees their delights and pleasures change:  
 they are not taken away, but transformed."

How then are we to see joy? I would like to suggest that joy can  
 be considered as the capacity to live here and now in this happiness  
 which is to come, to taste it already. Joy, then, as a conscious way of  
 seeing this happiness as more real than whatever is actually presented  
 to our senses. Unlike pleasure, joy is not fundamentally dependent on  
 circumstances. For a Christian, it is not just theoretical, because we  
 recognize the source of joy in the resurrection of the Lord and we are  
 invited to receive it as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, if joy receives from pleasure its concreteness, it brings  
 to pleasure a new vivacity, a new intensity and wonder. Yes, if someone  
 receives their being from God, if they accept their life from him, then  
 they find all kinds of pleasures they had not thought of looking for,  
 but which arise by themselves, numerous and free. It is a little like what  
 happens after a serious illness, when one rediscovers life all over again.  
 Nothing seems banal. The joy of faith means really rediscovering life,  
 with a finer sensibility, ready for wonder. And this leads to thanksgiv-  
 ing which is shot through with pleasure.

(Excerpt from *Short Writings from Taizé*, no. 14, by Brother Pierre-Yves.)



of the poor because I know that together we discover the joy of living.

**Love shown to us engenders a happiness which gradually fills the depths of the soul. And then we are led to make a conscious choice, to opt for joy.**

### Rosalía and Pablo (Spain)

In the summer of 2005, at the doors of the Church of Reconciliation, where thousands of young people were waiting to enter for Brother Roger's funeral celebration, God wanted our paths to cross. A few hours later we already knew that that immense gift would lead us to disrupt our plans and our lives, because the things of God are like that, surprising and beautiful.

From those first days spent together on the hill a word has rung out in our hearts: simplicity of life. That simplicity was very attractive to us, and we decided to follow that intuition, to commit ourselves to living a simpler life together. That way of living is what allows us to rediscover the joy of daily living, the simplicity of the everyday, the beauty of what really matters, the risk to go out searching for others and to find ourselves open to what arises.

Now, more than five years later, this is our way of opting for joy. And as a married couple expecting our first child, we cannot stop giving thanks for this discovery, which we live as a gift from God.

**The Holy Spirit sets the joy of the Risen Christ in the depths of our being. It is not only there when everything is easy. When we are faced with a challenging task, the effort can reawaken joy.**

### Jessa (Philippines)

Our country is suffering from economic crisis and a lot of people and families are in poverty. Not all families can have three meals a day. Some families have to raise seven or nine children at once, without even having a stable job or getting well compensated for this. Yet you can see that the people, despite this sad reality, can smile and continue with their life. We don't have a lot in life, financially or materially, but we see the other good side of this. We give more importance to things that are more meaningful, like our family, our friends, the people that surround us, that love, support and care for us. Yes, it's a fact we don't have a lot in terms of money, but we simply give more value to things in life which are free, and that makes us joyful.

Opting for joy is really a choice. People have to be faithful and keep on trusting. So as a young person in my country I also

live by this and I try to be positive, to be optimistic and I know that despite all the things that are happening God will always be there.

**The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann wrote: "Joy about nothing concrete, joy from the beyond; the joy of God's presence touching the soul. And the experience of this touch, of this joy will determine the course, the direction of one's thoughts and one's relationship to life." (Note 3)**

### Fiodar (Belarus)

Sometimes when you read an author's writings, you feel an inherent "thread", a mood, which is shown not by ideas or points the author is writing about, but rather a kind of light which is reflected in all the writer's works. In the writings of Fr.

Alexander Schmemmann this thread, this light, was joy. He was truly "the apostle of joy."

When I finished reading his Journal, the presence, the feeling of Gospel joy in the Holy Spirit remained in me. Sometimes he grumbles, sometimes he sharply criticizes different sides of the Church and of the secular world. But his criticism is always about the lack of joy, the inability to rejoice. Fr. Alexander wrote that refusal of joy is the "origin of false religion." "It is impossible to know that God exists and not rejoice."

**The rest of this article and other articles are available at [www.taize.fr/letter](http://www.taize.fr/letter)**

## BROTHER PIERRE ETIENNE (1922-2011)

On January 19, Brother Pierre Etienne died at the age of 88. Ill for several years, he had been hospitalized in early January. Being able to return home to Taizé on January 18 was for him a final reason for joy and, back among the brothers, he died in his sleep peacefully the next morning.

Born in Lyon, he attended high school in Grenoble and then studied theology at the Protestant Faculty of Montpellier. In 1952 he was ordained a pastor in the Reformed Church of France in Algiers and entrusted with a parish in Algeria. Then he became a Taizé brother and remained for some time in Algeria, where at that time a small group of brothers was living. He acquired a good knowledge of Islam. He lived with other brothers in the Ivory Coast and Niger as well, and then spent the rest of his life in Taizé.

He was an artist, and worked in the enamel pendants workshop of the community, where for years he created beautiful pieces. A man of great culture, he was a poet and, as such, he collaborated in preparing the French Protestant hymn book "Nos cœurs te chantent". He published several books of poetry.

## Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription  
Ordinary subscription: 6 (France 4.5) Euros  
Supporting subscription: 10 or 20 Euros

Means of payment:  
by credit card Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue: send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taizé, say what sum in Euros you wish to transfer.  
by international Giro transfer in Euros addressed to: Lettre de Taizé, IBAN: FR16 2004 1010 0700 6144 6M03 871, BIC: PSSFRPPLYO.  
by cheque in Euros to Lettre de Taizé, Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France, made payable through Société Générale.

In certain countries it is possible to pay within the country:  
Australia: \$12 - Letter from Taizé, Patricia Ho, P.O. Box 694, West Ryde 1685 NSW. Canada: \$10 Letter from Taizé, c/o Lesley Santiago, 145 College Circle, Ottawa, Ontario, K1K 4S1.  
New Zealand: \$15 - c/o Jenny Chisholm, 13 Arden Way, 6012 Wilton, Wellington. UK: £4.50 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Nick and Jane SHIELDS, 42 Blenheim Road, St Johns, WAKEFIELD, W. Yorkshire WF1 3JZ. USA: \$7 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Bruder, P.O. Box 1954, Lenox, MA 01240.  
For Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Asia: The Letter from Taizé can also be obtained in the following Asian countries. Contributions towards the cost of photocopying and postage will be most welcome. Bangladesh: Letter from Taizé, P.O. Box 48, H.P.O. 2200, Mymensingh. Cambodia: Fr. Sri Pramong Virachai, BP 123 Phnom Penh. East Timor: CP 299, Dili. Hong Kong: Ingrid Chan, Flat H, 14/F, Tower 125, 11 Po Yan Street, Sheung Wan. India: Letter from Taizé, c/o Sr Kochu, FMM, Stella Maris College, 17, Cathedral Road, Chennai 600 086. Indonesia: Sister Be Kien Nio, Biarawati Ursulin, Jln Anggrek 60, Bandung 40114. Japan: Isao Uematsu, c/o Yoda, 6-43-5 Shimoshakujii, Nerima-ku, Tokyo 177-0042. Korea: English edition. Ordinary Subscription: 2,000 Supporting Subscription: 4,000 to: Letter from Taizé, c/o Hwa Gok Dong 105-51, Kang Seo Ku, Seoul 157-010. Malaysia: Georgina Wong, N° 31 Jalan Wan Alwi 6A, Lihang 9750 Kuching, Sarawak. Myanmar: Youth Commission, CBCM, 292A Pyi Road, Sanchaung PO, Yangon 1111. Pakistan: Yaqub Sadeq, Catholic Church, Toba Tek Singh. Philippines: Letter from Taizé, c/o 28 San Antonio Street, San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City. Singapore: Angela Lee, 79 King's Road, 268141. Sri Lanka: Martin Costa, 31 Major Lalaka Fernando Mawatha, Kapuwatte Ja-Ela. Taiwan: Anna Tang, Aurora Center, N° 9, Lane 71, Hang Chow S. Road, Sec. 1, Taipei, ROC. Thailand: CYO, 122/6-7 Soi Naksuwan, Nonsee Road, Yannawa, Bangkok 10120.

Correspondence: Letter from Taizé, Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France e-mail: [lettre@taize.fr](mailto:lettre@taize.fr) [www.taize.fr](http://www.taize.fr) News from Taizé by email twice a month free of charge: [www.taize.fr/taizenews.php](http://www.taize.fr/taizenews.php)

Directeur de publication : A. Trochard, Édition: Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France, CPPAP n° 0115K79608 - Impression: Comipress, 01750 Replonges, France - DL 1126